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A day of remembrance and hope for those who serve and protect

Exactly twelve years after the deadly terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, Hampton officials, community leaders, and others will once again come together for a special day of Remembrance and Hope at Gosnolds Hope Park, 901 East Little Back River Road.

The goal is not just to remember the nearly 3,000 men and women who died twelve years ago. The goal is also to remember the thousands of service members who continue to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

"We feel an overwhelming obligation to recognize the significance of our military's sacrifice," said John Gately, chairman of Hampton's Military Affairs Committee, which is organizing the ceremony. "No one has paid a greater price than those who have given their lives in our nation's wars and the families who mourn their passing," Gately said.

"We remember the lost – the innocent victims and those who have paid the ultimate price in our efforts to defeat this evil and to secure our way of life," said Chuck Valliant, vice-chairman of the Military Affairs Committee.

Starting just after 8 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, four passenger jets leaving Boston, suburban Washington, D.C. and New Jersey were hijacked by terrorists. In less than 90 minutes, two jets from Boston had crashed into the New York's Twin Towers, and one jet from Washington had crashed into the Pentagon. A fourth jet from New Jersey, thought to be headed for the nation's capital, crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pa. after passengers began fighting the hijackers.

Three months later, City Council member Angela Leary helped organized a ceremony that included planting 11 evergreen "trees of hope" in soil that was mixed with soil brought to Hampton from the three attack sites. The 11 trees represented each of the 10 neighborhood zones in Hampton and those who protect and service.

Since then, the Day of Remembrance and Hope has been celebrated every Sept. 11.

The upcoming ceremony will include several speakers, a presentation of colors, special music, and the playing of taps. In addition, the names of all those lost on Sept. 11, 2001 and those who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan will be read aloud.

"I've participated since 2002," said Peggy Mertz, the Military Affairs Committee's chair for family support. She said the reading of the names is especially important "to families, to first-responders, vets, active-duty military members and to me. I hope the tradition continues forever."

The 2013 Day of Remember and Hope starts at 8 a.m. on Sept. 11 at Gosnolds Hope Park, 901 East Little Back River Road. Go online for more information about the Military Affairs Committee.

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